W.I.L.D.C.A.T.S™

COVE[illegible]CTION-TEAMS

DC

10
APR

JIM LEE
CHRIS CLAREMONT

JIM LEE
WILLIAMS

WILDC.A.T.S™

COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS

NUMBER TEN

COVER BY JIM LEE & SCOTT WILLIAMS
WILDC.A.T.S CREATED BY JIM LEE & BRANDON CHOI
HUNTSMAN CREATED BY CHRIS CLAREMONT

GATEWAY PART ONE

STORY: CHRIS CLAREMONT
PENCILS: JIM LEE
INKS: SCOTT WILLIAMS
LETTERS: TOM ORZECHOWSKI
COLORS: JOE CHIODO

SOLDIER'S STORY

STORY: H.K. PROGER
PENCILS: RYAN BENJAMIN
INKS: TOM MCWEENEY
LETTERS: RICHARD STARKINGS/ COMICRAFT
COLORS: JOE CHIODO

COLOR SEPARATION/PRODUCTION: WILDSTORM EFFECTS
INK ASSISTS: JD, RICH JOHNSON, JOHN TIGHE
COLOR ASSISTS: BEN FERNANDEZ
LETTERS PAGE EDITOR: JEFF MARIOTTE
ASSISTANT EDITOR: SARAH BECKER
EDITOR IN CHIEF: BILL KAPLAN

WILDSTORM EFFECTS IS NICK BELL, CLAUDIA CHONG, JEROMY COX, JOE DUNN, BEN FERNANDEZ, CHRIS MILOS, AND JESSICA RUFFNER.
COMICRAFT IS JOHN GAUSHELL AND BILL O'NEIL

WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

REMEMBER ALWAYS, THE *FIRST RULE*:

... THE WEAPON IS THE EXTENSION OF THE FLESH, THE FLESH OF THE MIND, THE MIND OF THE *SOUL*.

FOR THE *TRUE* WARRIOR TO SURVIVE IN COMBAT, AND EMERGE *TRIUMPHANT*...

...THOSE ELEMENTS MUST FUNCTION IN *HARMONY*.

NO OFFENSE, *ZEALOT*...

...BUT IS ALL THIS REALLY *NECESSARY*?

I MEAN, *SPARTAN'S* BEEN TEACHING ME HOW TO FIGHT. HE SAYS I'VE GOT SOME GREAT MOVES!

THE *CYBORG* IS SKILLED, BUT ULTIMATELY LIMITED.

HE IS A MACHINE. YOU ARE ONE OF THE *CHOSEN*.

HIS PROVINCE IS THE PURELY *PHYSICAL*. YOURS ENCOMPASSES MUCH MORE.

YOUR HERITAGE AND POWERS IMPOSE AN *OBLIGATION*, CHILD, TO USE THEM TO THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL.

FINE. BUT NO WAY DOES THAT MEAN YOU GET TO TURN ME INTO...

...ONE OF YOUR SECRET SOCIETY OF *BABE ASSASSINS*, OKAY?

A *CODA*?

OF THAT FATE, *VOODOO*...

...YOU NEED HAVE *NO FEAR*!

ARE YOU NUTS?!?

THAT'S *IT*, LADY! WE'RE *DONE*, I'M *OUTTA* HERE!

YOU CAN TAKE YOUR RULES AND YOUR STUPID *MYSTERIES* AND YOU CAN *SHOVE*--!

BE SILENT!

TUMP

OHWH!

THIS IS NOT A CHILD'S *GAME*, VOODOO, AND DEATH IS THE *LEAST* YOU HAVE TO FEAR.

THE FATES HAVE *MARKED* YOU. GET USED TO IT.

BECAUSE OTHER LIVES DEPEND ON YOURS AND IF YOU ARE FOUND WANTING, IT IS *THEY* WHO WILL PAY THE PRICE.

THE *LORD EMP* AND SPARTAN MAY BE TOLERANT OF YOUR SHORTCOMINGS. I AM NOT.

IF YOU ARE TO STAND BY MY SIDE IN BATTLE, THEN I WILL MAKE CERTAIN YOU ARE *WORTHY* OF THAT HONOR.

DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

ZEALOT--

BOOM!

--THE SKY!?!

THOOM!

LISTEN!

GUNFIRE-- FROM ABOARD THE SHIP-- SOLID SHOT AND DIRECTED ENERGY PROJECTORS!

HOW CAN YOU TELL?

MY EARS ARE STILL RINGING SO BADLY FROM THAT CRASH, I CAN BARELY HEAR YOU!

HEY! LOOK!

THERE'S SOMEONE ON THE DECK!

ZARK!

HELP...!

IN MERCY'S NAME...

...HELP... US!

TOO LATE, MEAT--

--FOR MERCY OR HELP!

THE BRIGHT AND BURNING THREAD OF YOUR DAYS HAS RUN OUT, ALABASTAR WU!

AS IT HAS FOR ALL THOSE WHO TRUSTED YOU!

ZEALOT, IS THAT A DAEMONITE?

IT'S A FORM I'VE NEVER BEFORE SEEN, VOODOO.

BUT SENTIMENTS I KNOW ONLY TOO WELL.

HIDE ON ONE WORLD, OR FLEE ACROSS A THOUSAND, YOU CANNOT ESCAPE YOUR DESTINY--

--DEATH!

PERHAPS SO, FIEND--

SKYOW

ZARK

BYANG

SHLUK

-- BUT IT WON'T BE *YOU* WHO KILLS HIM!

FLUMP

THAT'LL TEACH HIM, huh, Z?

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT *SMELL*?!

I SEE NO CAUSE HERE FOR HUMOR, VOODOO.

BUT THAT IS HOW *YOU* HIDE, IS IT NOT?

WELL, GIRL, THAT LUXURY IS GONE. THE TIME HAS COME TO *CHOOSE*--

--TO BE THE *MISTRESS* OF YOUR FATE...

...OR A PERPETUAL *VICTIM*.

THE MAN, *WU*, IS STILL ALIVE.

CARE FOR HIM...

...WHILE I SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING TO BE DONE FOR HIS COMPANIONS.

DON'T YOU FLASH *ATTITUDE* AT ME, ZEALOT!

SLAUGHTER'S *YOUR* STYLE, NOT MINE!

AND I CAN *TAKE CARE* OF MYSELF JUST FINE, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

I'M GONNA START BY DOIN' THE *SMART* THING, AND CALLIN' IN SOME *BACK-UP!*

TOO LATE-- FOR THAT...

...FOR *YOU!*

YIKES!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON YOUR FEET, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?! COME BACK HERE--

HEY!

A *RAKSHA'S* LIFE IS NOT AS OURS. NEITHER IS ITS *DEATH.*

I HAVEN'T... THE STRENGTH TO HELP.

TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE... TO TAKE... THE RISK

FORGIVE ME.

ZEALOT!

I GOT REAL *TROUBLE* HERE!

ZEALOT!

PULLING ME TOWARDS THE BODY! CAN'T BREAK MYSELF FREE!

MAYBE I CAN *PEEL* THE TENTACLE LOOSE--

--IT GRABBED MY *HANDS!*

MY *FACE!*

NO!

FROM THE BEACH, WHEN THE SHIP ARRIVED, I HEARD *SCREAMS*. SINCE I CAME ABOARD, THOUGH...

...ONLY *SILENCE*.

THE AIR IS SO *FOUL* WITH THE RAKSHA'S STENCH, THERE'S NO WAY TO SCENT THEIR PRESENCE.

MARGINAL LIGHT, TOO, AND THE FOOTING'S WORSE.

IDEAL FOR AN *AMBUSH*-- WHAT'S THIS?!

A *CHILD*--

--AND *ALIVE!*

NOT FOR LONG, MEAT!

WHILE *SISTER ZEALOT* DRAWS BREATH, CREATURE...

...SO SHALL THIS CHILD!

A PROUD BOAST...

...BUT A HOLLOW ONE.

FOR YOU ARE ALONE, MEAT--

AGKGH!

KLUDD

...WHILE THE RAKSHAS ARE LEGION!

LADY OFFERED YOU HER *SERVICES*, LITTLE PRINCESS.

HONOR DEMANDS THE FAVOR BE RETURNED.

KIA!!

THEY COULDN'T BE MORE DIFFERENT.

HE'S A **SHADOW** AMONG SHADOWS, NOT QUITE HANDSOME, DEFINED BY A WHISKEY BROGUE AND THE ROGUISH ATHLETICISM OF A BORN PREDATOR.

SHE'S FLASHING STEEL, ALL QUICK-SILVER GRACE, WITH A BEAUTY OF FORM AND FUNCTION THAT'S TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD.

AIM FOR THE *HEAD!*

THE ONLY WAY TO FINISH THEM FOR SURE IS TO SMASH THROUGH THEIR *BRAIN PAN!*

YOU FIGHT WELL, STRANGER.

JUST DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY.

FOR **TRUTH.** HE'S RUNNING ON RAW TALENT, BUT THE LONGER HE LASTS...

...THE BETTER HE GETS.

HE SEES A MOVE **ONCE,** THAT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE IT PART OF HIM.

WHERE THIS "**SISTER ZEALOT'S**" CONCERNED...

... IT'S CLEAR HE'S LEARNING FROM THE **BEST.**

BLESS MY SOUL.

I THINK WE'RE **DONE.**

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, STRANGER!

SHE'S VERY WARY.

HE SAVED HER LIFE AND SHE STILL DOESN'T TRUST HIM.

I LIKE THAT.

HIS REACTION IS IMMEDIATE AND INSTINCTIVE...

I QUITE UNDER-STAND.

... AND AS MUCH A SURPRISE TO ME AS TO HER.

YOUR BLADE, LADY.

IF YOU DON'T MIND SOME ADVICE, THOUGH...

... I WOULDN'T LINGER.

THE THING ABOUT *RAKSHAS*, THERE'S ALWAYS *MORE* OF THEM.

WHAT ABOUT... OTHER SURVIVORS?

WE'RE IT, I'M AFRAID.

THEY'RE ALSO VERY THOROUGH.

HOW'S BY YOU, YOUNG TAI?

ALIVE, THANKS TO YOU.

'S WHAT I'M HERE FOR.

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM *SISTER ZEALOT.*

JUST DOING WHAT COMES... NATURALLY.

DO TELL?

THIS IS *MIRANDA.*

I'M *HUNTSMAN.*

SHE IS YOUR *CHILD?*

I... *PROTECT* HER.

SHE HAS A LOT OF QUESTIONS AS WE RABBIT OUT OF THE WRECK.

HUNT AVOIDS 'EM ALL.

ME, I KEEP MY EYES CLOSED THE WHOLE WAY.

THE STENCH OF DEATH IS BAD ENOUGH. I DON'T WANT TO LOOK IT IN THE FACE.

YOUR FRIEND'S *GONE.*

NO SIGN OF *WU* OR THE RAKSHA, EITHER.

I AM FINISHED WITH YOUR *DISSEMBLING,* HUNTSMAN.

ANSWER MY QUESTIONS.

LOOKS LIKE THERE WAS A FIGHT AND VOODOO *LOST.*

OR SUFFER THE CONSE-QUENCES?

IF THIS IS THE THANKS I GET FOR SAVING YOUR LIFE...

...P'RHAPS NEXT TIME I'LL THINK TWICE.

NO HELP WAS ASKED. I'D HAVE DONE WELL ENOUGH ON MY OWN.

WANNA *BET?*

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING ABOUT PRIDE AND FALLS.

SPARE ME, PLEASE.

A WARRIOR WORTH HIS NAME KNOWS WHEN TO STAND ALONE...

... AND WHEN TO TAKE ANOTHER'S HAND.

THOSE ARE ***NASTY*** WOUNDS. AND RAKSHAS BY THEIR NATURE ARE ***SEPTIC*** AS SIN.

YOU... ***SHAME*** ME, HUNTSMAN. WITH WORDS ***AND*** DEEDS.

BUT VOODOO WAS IN ***MY*** CHARGE. I AM ***RESPONSIBLE***...

GAME'S A LONG WAY FROM OVER.

THE SIGNS INDICATE THE RAKSHA TOOK SOMEONE AS A ***HOST***. ODDS ARE IT WAS YOUR ***FRIEND***.

THAT IS POSSIBLE.

VOODOO'S POWER IS FORMIDABLE, BUT IT ALSO LEAVES HER DANGEROUSLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO ***POSSESSION***.

SHE LACKS THE TRAINING-- OF MIND AND SPIRIT AS MUCH OF BODY-- NECESSARY TO PROPERLY DEFEND HERSELF.

WEO WEO WEO WEO

THAT'S WHY I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO TEACH--!

FRIEND OR FOE?

NEITHER. THE ***POLICE!***

WE MUST NOT BE FOUND HERE!

TRACKS INDICATE A MAN IN SHOES, FOLLOWED BY SOMEONE IN BARE FEET.

IF THE RAKSHA'S RIDING VOODOO, IT'S STILL AFTER ITS ORIGINAL PREY.

I HAVE A ***BULLETBIKE*** BEYOND THE DUNES.

WE CAN USE IT TO ***FOLLOW!***

IT'S A *SHIP!*

PRETTY FAIR-SIZED, TOO.

A THOUSAND TONS OR BETTER.

POLIC

SO TELL ME, LIEUTENANT, HOW'D IT GET PARKED ON OUR BEACH?

NYPD

IF IT WEREN'T FROM BE-FORE YOUR TIME, *MORALES,* I'D MAKE A REALLY NIFTY "*CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*" REFERENCE...

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, TOMMY--

POLICE

NYPD

OLICE

--UP YOURS!

THIS IS THE *NEW YORK POLICE DEPARTMENT!*

ANYBODY ABOARD-- *SHOW YOUR*

SELVES!

POLICE

NYPD

HALO INCORPORATED, GOOD EVENING.

JACOB MARLOWE, PLEASE. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I SPEAK WITH HIM.

I'M SORRY, SIR, MR. MARLOWE IS UNAVAILABLE. MAY I TAKE A MESSAGE?

WHO SHALL I SAY CALLED?

NO...

...NO MESSAGE, THANK YOU.

I'LL TRY AGAIN LATER.

BRUNKT

DAMN YOU, MARLOWE!

I WOULD RECOMMEND, SIR, THAT YOU CALL BACK DURING BUSINESS HOURS...

YOU *SWORE* THAT NUMBER WAS GOOD *ANYTIME*, DAY OR NIGHT.

I SENT WORD I WAS COMING, WHY AREN'T YOU THERE ?!

I'VE NO CHOICE. I'LL HAVE TO TRUST HE'LL BE THERE.

BUT IF YOU CAN'T KEEP *THIS* PROMISE, "DEAR FRIEND"...

...WHAT ABOUT THE *REST?*

WHOA!

CHECK IT OUT!

KILLER LOOK, MAN!

LATEX IS SO TOTALLY LAST YEAR!

IS SHE OKAY?

HELP... ME!

MY GOD-- *LOOK* AT HER!

IS SHE SICK? WAS SHE ATTACKED?!

MARTY, CALL 9-1-1! WE NEED AN *AMBULANCE!*

EASY, MISS, JUST TAKE IT EASY. I'M A PARAMEDIC, WE'RE CALLING FOR HELP, YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.

GINO, ARE YOU *CRAZY.* SHE COULD BE *CONTAGIOUS!*

GIVE IT A REST, CONNIE.

THERE'S A PHONE JUST OVER THE *BOARDWALK.* I'LL ONLY BE A MINUTE.

NO NEED TO GO, MEAT.

I HAVE *ALL* I NEED FOR MY SURVIVAL...

...RIGHT HERE!

ARRGH

SHE'S *MELTING* HIM!

SHE MUST BE ONE'A THEM *MUTANTS.*

GET *OUTTA* HERE, CONNIE--CALL THE *COPS*--

MARTY, DON'T ACT CRAZY, COME *WITH* ME!

HE'S MY *BUD,* CONNIE, I CAN'T JUST *LEAVE* HIM!

PERISH THE THOUGHT.

FAR BETTER THAT YOU SHARE HIS FATE.

KRAK!

THE LOCAL MEAT IS SO FRAGILE.

ONE BLOW BREAKS THEM ALL TO BITS.

DEAD MEAT IS OF NO USE TO ME.

THWIPP!

I DERIVE MY SUSTENANCE FROM THE LIVING.

BETTER. MUCH BETTER.

THOUGH MORE WILL BE NEEDED TO SUSTAIN MY CURRENT FORM AT PEAK EFFICIENCY.

AND I KNOW...

...THE PERFECT CANDIDATE.

NO WEAPON AT HAND, I'M NO MATCH FOR THE RAKSHA WITHOUT ONE.

IF I RUN FOR THE STREET, SHE'S SURE TO CATCH ME!

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO DO-- THE *TRAIN!?!*

BY ALL THE *GREAT GODS*, CAN'T YOU COME ANY FASTER?!

HURRY, DAMN YOUR CLANKING METAL HIDE, *HURRY!*

7 CANAL STREET

TOO SLOW TO GET HERE, TOO SLOW TO LEAVE...

...THIS CURSED MONSTROSITY IS SURE TO BE THE *DEATH* OF ME!

WHY, ALABASTAR...

...I COULDN'T HAVE PUT THAT BETTER MYSELF.

NO!

NEE SMOKES THE MAN'S MAN CIGARETTES

YOU RAIL AGAINST THE INEVITABLE, MEAT.

*YOU'RE **DOOMED**, AND YOUR PRECIOUS **COMMUNITY** WITH YOU!*

SKAASH

NEVER!

BOOT!

DO YOU HEAR ME, BUTCHER OF WORLDS--

7 CANAL STREET

--NEVER!

HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY, MEAT.
THE HARDER THE CHASE, THE SWEETER MY FINAL FEAST.
PHONE
AND THE BEAUTY IS, I SEE IN THIS FORM'S MEMORY THAT IT HAS **COMPANIONS**...
...WHO SHALL SERVE ME, BOTH AS HUNTERS...
...AND ULTIMATELY, **PREY!**
JULES!
IT'S **PRIS.**
SOMETHING'S ... HAPPENED.

THANKS, ***VOID,*** FOR TELE-PORTING ME BACK TO MANHATTAN...
... AND SUMMONING THE REST OF THE ***WILDC.A.T.S.*** TEAM.
THE STATUS BOARD INDICATED THAT YOU WERE ***TOGETHER.***
IN THE CONFUSION, WHEN THE CREATURE ATTACKED, WE WERE ***SEPARATED.***
I THINK SHE WAS CAPTURED.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT, THOUGH, IS THAT THEIR LEADER, ***ALABASTAR WU,*** HAS COME TO SETTLE A ***BLOOD DEBT*** WITH JACOB MARLOWE.
AND HE ISN'T THE KIND OF PERSON TO LET ***ANYTHING*** STAND IN HIS WAY.
SO WE FIND THIS WU, WE KICK HIS BUTT, NO PROBLEM.
ZEALOT? CAPTURED? SORRY, I DON'T BUY IT.
WHERE IS ***ZEALOT,*** VOODOO?

WHAT D'YOU WANT TO HEAR, ***WARBLADE,*** THAT IT'S ***MY*** FAULT?
FINE! OKAY!! I CONFESS!!! I SCREWED UP BIG TIME!!!!
SHE COUNTED ON ME AND I LET HER DOWN. BUT AT LEAST I HAVE THE CHANCE TO MAKE AMENDS, BY SAVING ***JACOB!***

PROBLEM IS, HE'S GONE ***"WALKABOUT"*** AGAIN.
HE'S WANDERING THE CITY, COMPLETELY OUT OF TOUCH.
UNLESS YOUR ***CLAIRVOYANT*** PSI TALENT CAN LOCK IN ON HIM, ***VOID.***
I CAN BUT TRY, ***SPARTAN.***

BEEN A WHILE, WU.

GOTTA SAY, I'VE SEEN YOU LOOKIN' BETTER.

DOCKLANDS

ANOTHER HALO REDEVELOPMENT

A LIFE WITHOUT CHALLENGE IS NOT WORTH LIVING.

IF YOU SAY SO.

JUST DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU CONSIDER A *CHALLENGE*.

WOUND LIKE THAT'D SLOW DOWN MOST PEOPLE.

MIGHT EVEN *STOP* A FEW.

I HAVE NEVER BEEN "*MOST*" PEOPLE.

THAT'S A FACT!

ANY MORE THAN *YOU* HAVE, MY LORD *EMP*.

DIFFERENCE IS, YOU *REMEMBER* IT ALL.

I AM CALLING IN OUR MARKER, JACOB, TO BE PAID IN FULL.

JACOB!

THANK GOODNESS WE FOUND YOU, SIR.

YOU'RE IN *DEADLY DANGER!*

IS THIS HOW YOU *HONOR* YOUR WORD? WE WERE TO MEET *ALONE!*

IT'S NONE OF *MY* DOING, WU, BELIEVE ME!

BEHAVE YOURSELF, OLD MAN, WE'LL GET ALONG FINE.

WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON, *SPARTAN?!*

CAN'T A MAN CONDUCT BUSINESS IN *PRIVATE* ANYMORE?

YOU'RE BEING *SET-UP*, SIR! THIS IS A *TRAP!*

I SUPPOSE THE *CYBORG* DESERVES BROWNIE POINTS FOR BEING *HALF-RIGHT.*

WHOZZAT ??

RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, MARLOWE!

GIVE THE LI'L GUY A GREAT BIG CIGAR!

HOW NICSSSE TO BE REMEMBERED.

TARGETS ACQUIRED, *ATTICA*, MATRIX LOCKED.

FIRING SEQUENCERS INITIALIZED.

I AM *PROVIDENCE.*

I HAVE DANCED THE PATHWAYS OF YOUR FUTURE, *LORD EMP...*

... AND SEALED THEM *ALL*, SAVE THE ONE THAT LEADS TO THIS PLACE AND TO US...

... AND TO YOUR *DOOM.*

RESIST US AT YOUR *PERIL.*

YOU HEARD THE LADY, HEROES.

WE CAN DO THIS EASY, WE CAN DO THIS HARD.

EITHER WAY, YOU'RE *HISTORY.*

ATTICA!

MY *FUTURE* IS MY OWN, ASSASSIN.

I BOW TO NO *FALSE PROVIDENCE!*

PERFECT, MEAT.

YOUR FATE IS SEALED.

À SUIVRE / TO BE CONTINUED

"SO YA WANNA HEAR MY STORY, HUH? OKAY, FINE."

"OCTOBER, 1950. WE DIDN'T KNOW IT YET, BUT IT WAS ALL ABOUT TO *HIT THE FAN* IN KOREA. I WAS WITH IX CORPS, MOVING TOWARD THE YALU RIVER, MOPPING UP THE KPA*, AND THINKIN' WE WERE ABOUT TO *FINISH* THIS WAR, WHEN..."

WELL, WHADDYA KNOW, LIEUTENANT -- SOME *REAL* ACTION!

IT WAS STARTIN' TO LOOK LIKE THE NORTH KOREANS WERE JUST GONNA ROLL OVER AND PLAY *DEAD* NOW THAT THE *U.S. ARMY'S* IN TOWN.

WRAM WRAM

STOW IT, SOLDIER! YOU'VE GOT *NO IDEA* WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST HERE.

*KOREAN PEOPLE'S ARMY

THERE'S A WHOLE --

LOOK OUT! GRENADE!

WHUNK

EVERYBODY *DOWN!* I'VE *GOT* IT!

WHAT IN TH' --?

GET YOUR BUTT *OFFA'* THAT, SIR!

UNNNFF!

THIS THING'S GOT "*RETURN TO SENDER*" WRITTEN *ALL OVER* IT!

NOW WHAT KINDA' DUMB @!!! STUNT WAS *THAT?*

WHA-BOOM

YOU'RE S'POSED TA MAKE THE *OTHER* POOR SAP DIE FOR HIS COUNTRY, *REMEMBER?*

YOU DON'T *GET* IT, DO YOU, SOLDIER? WE'RE ALL *DEAD MEN!*

THE *CHINESE* HAVE ENTERED THE WAR. THESE GUYS WE'RE FIGHTING ARE JUST AN *ADVANCE GUARD* -- THE WHOLE DAMN *PLA** IS RIGHT BEHIND THEM, ABOUT TO COME MARCHING THROUGH THIS *PASS.*

AND YOU KNOW WHAT OUR *ORDERS* ARE, SOLDIER? WE'RE SUPPOSED TO *SIT HERE* AND *DELAY* THEM WHILE THEY GRIND US UP LIKE *HAMBURGER!*

SO WE CAN EITHER DIE *FAST* SMOTHERING A GRENADE, OR WE CAN DIE *SLOW.* I'VE HEARD *STORIES* ABOUT WHAT THE REDS DO TO PRISONERS...

YA KNOW SOMETHIN', LIEUTENANT?

I AIN'T GOT TIME FOR *STORIES,* AND I AIN'T GOT TIME FOR *YOU!*

*PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY.

WHAK

GNGNGHH!

YOU CAN LIE THERE FEELIN' *SORRY* FOR YOURSELF WAITIN' TO GET *KILLED,* BUT ME, I GOT A *BETTER* IDEA.

WHOOMP

JUST NEED TO ROUND UP A LITTLE *ORD-NANCE...*

...AND THEN I'M TAKIN' THIS FIGHT TO THE *BAD GUYS.*

FOOOSHHH

"YEAH, MAYBE CHARGIN' A COMPANY OF CHINESE ARMY SCOUTS WASN'T THE *SMARTEST* THING I'VE EVER DONE, BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE I HADDA WHOLE LOTTA *OPTIONS*..."

EAT *THIS*, YA COMMIE RATS!

KRAK KRAK KRAK KRAK

BRAAP BRAAPP BRAAAPP

HE'S GONE *NUTS*, LIEUTENANT!

GET *BACK* HERE, SOLDIER! THAT'S AN *ORDER!*

WHA'D YA SAY, LIEUTENANT? I CAN'T HEAR YA OVER ALL THIS *SHOOTIN'*!

"THING IS, I'D COME UP WITH A *PLAN* -- "

BRAAP BRAAP

ZAP

VNG

POW

ARRGH!

"-- AND I JUST HADDA HOPE I *LIVED* LONG ENOUGH TO SEE IT THROUGH."

BRAAP BRAAP BRAAP

DON'T WORRY, PAL. THE RIFLE MAY BE OUTTA AMMO...

...BUT THE TOMMY'S STILL GOT A FEW ROUNDS LEFT FOR YA!

YEARGH!

"-- *LIVED* LONG ENOUGH AND HAD ENOUGH *BULLETS!*"

HEY, LOOK -- MY .45 AIN'T QUITE EMPTY YET!

BLAM! BLAM!

BLAM! KLIK

"SO HERE WAS MY PLAN, IN A NUTSHELL:

"THE *RED CHINESE* WERE GONNA TRY SQUEEZIN' THEIR *ARMY* THROUGH THE *PASS* UP AHEAD --

"-- SO I WAS AIMIN' TO BLOCK IT BEFORE THEY GOT THERE."

AAGH!

BLAM

"THAT IS, IF THEIR *ADVANCE GUARD* WOULD LET ME...

"...LUCKILY, I ALWAYS *WAS* A PERSUASIVE KINDA GUY."

WHY DON'T YA JUST LAY DOWN AND *DIE*, OKAY?

WHAKT

CHKK

"AND EVEN *WITHOUT* ANY AMMO LEFT --"

GHKK!

NO *WAY* YOU'RE STOPPIN' ME *NOW*, PAL!

SLAASH

"-- I WAS ABLE TO BRING 'EM AROUND TO *MY WAY* OF THINKIN'!"

OOPSA-DAISY, BUDDY. I GOT PLACES TA *BE*.

"WITH THE *ENEMY* TAKEN CARE OF, I JUST HAD TO GET UP THE *MOUNTAINSIDE* TO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN.

"OF COURSE, MOUNTAIN CLIMBING'S A LOT *EASIER* WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A GUT FULL OF PLA *LEAD* SLOWIN' YOU DOWN."

SHLUUMP

"STILL, I WASN'T ABOUT LET A LITTLE THING LIKE *BLEEDIN' TO DEATH* STOP ME WHEN I WAS SO CLOSE TO SUCCESS.

"SEE, I'D NOTICED THAT THE MOUNTAINS IN THE AREA WERE FULL OF LOOSE ROCKS."

HUNNGH HUNNGH

"I FIGURED A WELL-PLACED *GRENADE* OR TWO JUST MIGHT GET A FEW OF THEM TUMBLING, START AN AVALANCHE, AND *BLOCK THE PASS*."

→NNGH← ...ALMOST... THERE...

"AT LEAST, THAT WAS THE *ORIGINAL* PLAN."

"ME BLOWIN' MYSELF UP WAS A *NEW ADDITION* -- DIDN'T HAVE THE *STRENGTH* TO CRAWL AWAY."

JUST... →GNNGG← HOPE THIS WORKS...

CAREFUL WITH THAT, SOLDIER.

WHO TH -- ?

-- IT WOULD BE A *SHAME* TO LET SO VALIANT A WARRIOR DIE NEEDLESSLY.

A... AN ANGEL?

YOU SHALL LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY.

JUNGGH

AND THAT'S MY STORY.

THE GRENADES STARTED AN *AVALANCHE* AND BLOCKED THE PASS, BUT I DON'T KNOW *HOW* I SURVIVED THE EXPLOSION, WHO THAT WOMAN WAS --

-- IF SHE WAS EVEN FOR *REAL* --

-- OR *HOW* I GOT BACK TO MY UNIT.

ALL I KNOW FOR *SURE* IS WHAT I'M DOIN' *HERE*. THAT DAMN *LIEUTENANT* PUT ME UP ON CHARGES FOR *SLUGGIN'* HIM.

WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, BUDDY?

HOW'D YOU WIND UP IN THE *STOCKADE*?

ME?

I CAME TO *FREE* YOU, SOLDIER.

ANGEL?

AFTER ALL, IT WOULD BE A *SHAME* TO LET SO VALIANT A WARRIOR LANGUISH HERE IN PRISON.

YA KNOW, ANGEL -- I THINK I COULD *REALLY* GET TO *LIKE* YOU!

THE BEGINNING...

ZONE